

Get to know the Spiritual Gifts

Every good and perfect gift comes from above, and that includes the gifts the Holy Spirit has placed within you. Yet so many believers live as though the parcel arrived but was never unwrapped. We admire it on the shelf, we talk about it on Sundays, and then we carry on through the week as though nothing was ever given. God did not intend His gifts to be ornaments. He intended them to be tools in the hands of a people who are building something that lasts.

So how do we familiarise ourselves with what we have received? It begins with recognising that the gifts are not rewards for the spiritually mature but grace given for the good of the whole body. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12 that to each one a manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. Notice the direction of travel. The gift comes to you, but it is for others. Prophecy, wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, discernment, tongues, serving, teaching, encouraging, giving, leading, mercy: these are not badges of status. They are channels of blessing, flowing from heaven through you and out into a world that is desperate for hope.

Familiarity grows in the same way any relationship grows, through time, attention and practice. You will not discover your gifting by reading about it alone, any more than you would learn to swim by studying the pool. Start where you are, with what is already in your hand. Serve in your local church. Pray for people. Offer the word of encouragement that rises in your spirit, even when your hands shake. Ask trusted leaders and friends what they see in you, because the body often recognises a gift before the individual does. And keep a soft heart before God in the secret place, for it is in stillness that the Spirit so often clarifies what He has deposited.

Then comes the question of how to use the gifts. The answer, in a word, is love. First Corinthians 13 does not interrupt Paul's teaching on gifts; it completes it. A prophetic word delivered without love wounds rather than builds. An act of service done for applause feeds the ego rather than the Kingdom. Use your gift humbly, accountably and consistently. Stay teachable and grateful. Weigh what you sense against Scripture. Submit what you bring to the discernment of the community, because the gifts were never designed for lone rangers. They were designed for the family.

And when should we use them? Wisdom here is vital. There are moments when the Spirit prompts and the door stands wide open: a colleague shares a struggle, and you carry a word of knowledge; a neighbour is unwell, and faith rises to pray; a friend is weary, and

encouragement sits ready on your tongue. Step through those doors with courage. But there are also moments to wait. Not every impression must be voiced immediately, and not every gathering is the right setting. Paul urges that everything be done decently and in order, so ask yourself: will this build up, will it strengthen, will it point people to Jesus? If the answer is yes, and the timing bears witness in your spirit and with those around you, then release what you carry. If not, hold it prayerfully. A word in season is like apples of gold; the same word out of season can bruise.

Remember, too, that the gifts are for the marketplace as much as the meeting room. God is raising up believers who hear heaven in the boardroom, the classroom, the hospital ward and the school gate. Your gifting is not confined to a Sunday service. It travels with you into every sphere you influence, and it may well be that your workplace is the very field God has assigned you to sow in.

So do not bury what you have been given. Unwrap it. Familiarise yourself with it. Practise it in love, exercise it with wisdom, and offer it back to the One who gave it. The world around us does not need more spectators of the Spirit's work. It needs people who have received and who are ready, in every season and setting, to be released.

Questions

1. If the gifts are given "for the common good", how does that change how you use yours? **(1 Corinthians 12:7)**
2. What does it look like to be a faithful steward of your gift this week? **(1 Peter 4:10)**
3. Why is a gift exercised without love worth nothing? **(1 Corinthians 13:1-3)**
4. What causes us to bury our gifts, and how do we step out instead? **(Matthew 25:24-28)**
5. How do we discern when to release a gift and when to wait? **(1 Corinthians 14:26, 40)**